

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
6TH COUNCIL, 37TH SESSION**

**RECOMMENDATION TO
COUNCIL NO. 1-37**

TABLED ON JUNE 27, 1968



May 13, 1968.

CONFIDENTIAL -

Not for release before
tabling during the 37th
Session of Council

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL NO. 1

(Second Session 1968)

EXTENSION OF OTTER SEASON

DISPOSITION

Tabled	To Committee	Accepted as Read	Accepted as Amended	Deferred (to Session)	Rejected	Noted not Considered

EXTENSION OF OTTER SEASON

At its 36th session, Council requested that the feasibility of extending the closing date of the otter season to April 30th from February 28th, be studied by the Game Management Service. Because such a study requires the compilation and analysis of economic and biological data not yet available, the Service has prepared an interim report for Council's consideration.

The open season for fur-bearing animals takes into account both the economy of the trapper and the biology of the species. Seasons are established during periods in which the fur is most valuable, in order that the trapper may realize the maximum income from each animal caught. They usually close when evident deterioration devaluates the fur or when pairing or rearing of young requires that the animals be protected. Thus the survival of the species is assured and the trapper can look forward to a steady income.

As the fur of the otter deteriorates under the singeing effect of increased sunlight, the price of the pelt declines. It is agreed the price might still be sufficiently high after February 28th to make otter trapping worthwhile and to justify extending the season on that basis.

However, biological factors must also be considered. The otter is an animal our knowledge of which is relatively restricted. It has never played an important role in trapping and only rarely has the total annual catch in the Northwest Territories exceeded 200. Its evident scarcity is supported by the extremely few observations made and recorded. No data on the gestation periods of the two sub species found in the Territories are available. This suggests caution when it is considered that the gestation period of the twenty-four sub species on the North American Continent varies from 61 to 63 days in one sub species to 12 months and 15 days in another. If a gestation period of 12 months is the rule in the Territories then a litter can be expected every alternate year. When the low reproduction rate (an average of three young ones) is taken into account, then the relatively short open season of 4 months is not only justified but urgently required.

Thus, the important question of the effect of a longer season on the future of the otter population remains unanswered, and the research necessary to answer it could require many years of study. Although some trappers could now earn a little additional money, a decision to extend the otter season at this time would appear to be premature.

Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends therefore that an extension of the otter season not be considered until more data has been collected for Council's full consideration.